

Brazil Wants Fair Profit for Biodiverse Areas

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Brazil's Minister of Environment, Marina Silva, on January 21, emphasized the importance of a joint stance by the Group of Like-Minded Megadiverse Countries in discussions on the international system of benefit-sharing at the meeting that was held in New Delhi, in India.

The gathering was intended to establish a common position among the megadiverse countries for the talks that will begin in March, in Bangkok, Thailand, to debate the system.

"In our condition of megadiverse countries, we cannot afford to enter alliances with those who defend restrictive or procrastinatory positions regarding the creation of such a system," the Minister told the closing session of the meeting.

The Group, formed in 2002, is composed of Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, Venezuela, South Africa, China, Congo, the Philippines, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Madagascar, and Kenya.

Together they account for 70% of the planet's biodiversity, of which Brazil is responsible for 22%, according to scientists' estimates.

According to Minister Silva, the group's unity will be essential in the discussions with developed countries.

In her opinion, the Bangkok encounter will provide an excellent opportunity to demonstrate to the world the megadiverse countries' commitment to the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its constituents, and the fair and equitable division of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. These are the main goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

The international system of benefit-sharing contemplates the fair and equitable division of profits obtained through the exploitation of biodiversity and the knowledge of indigenous and traditional populations.

This mechanism is envisioned in the Convention on Biological Diversity, signed at the World Environment Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (Rio-92).

In Silva's view, it is incongruous that, in the majority of the megadiverse countries, the areas richest in biodiversity are also identified with pockets of poverty and social exclusion.

"It is unacceptable that the populations of these areas, often those most responsible for the conservation of biological resources and possessors of knowledge associated with them, are not recompensed in a fair and equitable manner for the conservation of these resources and for the application of this knowledge.

"It is unacceptable not only because society is socially unjust, but also because the treatment meted out to these populations encourages environmental degradation, in the absence of survival alternatives," the Minister concluded.

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